

**An Analysis on the Psychology of Cannibalistic Serial
Killers on the Basis of the Novel and the Movie
*The Silence of the Lambs***

*Project submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of*

Bachelor of Arts

in

English and History

By

Harisankar K

CCASADER02



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**Department of B.A English & History
Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda**

Kerala-680125

Declaration

I, **Harisankar K**, hereby declare that this project entitled **An Analysis on the Psychology of Cannibalistic Serial Killers on the Basis on the Novel and the Movie *The Silence of the Lambs***, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History, is a research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of, **Miss. Nahna Kamarudheen V** Assistant Professor, Department of English & History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

Irinjalakuda

March 2021

Harisankar K

Department of B.A. English & History

Christ College (Autonomous)

Irinjalakuda-680125

Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **An Analysis on the Psychology of Cannibalistic Serial Killers on the Basis on the Novel and the Movie *The Silence of the Lambs***, a record of research work carried out by **Mr. Harisankar K** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History submitted to the University of Calicut.

Mr. George Alex

Coordinator, Dept. of English & History

Christ College (Autonomous)

Irinjalakuda

Miss. Nahna Kamarudheen V

Dept. of English & History

Assistant Professor

(Supervising Teacher)

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Introduction

William Thomas Harris III (Born on, September 22, 1940) is an American writer, best known for a series of suspense novels about his most famous character, Hannibal Lecter. The majority of his works have been adapted into films and television, the most notable being *The Silence of the Lambs*, which became only the Third film in Academy Awards history to sweep the Oscars in major categories. He was introverted and bookish in grade school and then blossomed in high school. He attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he majored in English and graduated in 1964. While in college, he worked as a reporter for the local newspaper, the Waco Tribune-Herald, covering the police beat. In 1968, he moved to New York City to work for Associated Press until 1974 when he began work on his debut novel, *Black Sunday*.

Little is known about Harris's personal life as he avoids publicity and did not grant any interviews between 1976 and 2019. At Baylor University he met and married Harriet Anne Haley, a fellow student, in June 1961. They had one daughter, Elizabeth Anne, before they divorced in August 1968. Harris was always close to his mother Polly and called her every night no matter where he was. Fellow novelist Stephen King remarked that if writing is sometimes tedious for other authors, to Harris it is like "writhing on the floor in agonies of frustration", because for Harris, "the very act of writing is a kind of torment". Novelist John Dunning said of Harris, "All he is a talent of the first rank". In 2019, he elaborated on his process, as well as the difficulty, describing it as passive, sometimes you really have to shove and grunt and sweat. He lives in South Florida and has a summer home in Sag Harbor, New York. His long-term domestic

partner is Pace Barnes, a woman who, according to USA Today, "used to work in publishing and is as outgoing as he is quiet". Harris's friend and literary agent Morton Janklow said of him: "He's one of the good guys. He is big, bearded and wonderfully jovial. If you met him, you would think he was a choirmaster. He loves cooking—he's done the Le Cordon Bleu exams—and it's great fun to sit with him in the kitchen while he prepares a meal and see that he's as happy as a clam. He has these old-fashioned manners, a courtliness you associate with the South". In his first major interview in 43 years, to The New York Times in 2019 to promote *Cari Mora*, he revealed himself to be a nature lover, and a long-time visitor and volunteer of the Pelican Harbor Seabird Station, an animal rescue center in Miami, Florida for 20 years. The staff were not aware of who Harris was until a few years prior to when the interview was conducted.

The Silence of the Lambs is a psychological horror novel by Thomas Harris. First published in 1988, it is the sequel to Harris's 1981 novel *Red Dragon*. Both novels feature the cannibalistic serial killer Dr. Hannibal Lecter, this time pitted against FBI Special Agent Clarice Starling. Its film adaptation directed by Jonathan Demme was released in 1991 to widespread critical acclaim and box office success. It won the Academy Award for Best Picture. *The Silence of the Lambs*, written by Thomas Harris, is the second novel in his series about the psychopathic cannibal Hannibal Lecter, a genius mastermind psychiatrist with incredible powers of deduction. The novel centers around rookie FBI agent Clarice Starling and her attempts to stop the sadistic serial killer Buffalo Bill, a madman who abducts overweight women and starves them before skinning them with the intent of wearing their skin.

Starling is sent to seek assistance from Lector, who is locked away in a heavily guarded mental institution, for the murders he has committed. Lector offers to trade his criminal profiling skills in exchange for details about Starling's troubled childhood. In the meantime, information obtained from Buffalo Bill's most recent victim suggests that he is increasing the frequency of his kills. The stakes are further raised when the daughter of a prominent senator is kidnapped. Under immense pressure from her commanding officer, Starling further delves into her unusual relationship with Lector and offers him a transfer from his current asylum to an institution with more relaxed security if he provides her with the true identity of Buffalo Bill. Lector uses the offer to his advantage and agrees only if he is able to personally present the information to the senator. Once at their meeting, Lector toys with the senator before providing her with a false name that leads the FBI nowhere. Convinced that Lector knows the killer's true identity, Starling is forced to trade her worst lingering childhood memory, the screaming of lambs before their slaughter, for information that ultimately leads her to Shortly after, Lector murders his guards and escapes the asylum, leaving Starling to continue her investigation on her own. In a final confrontation, Starling is forced to kill Buffalo Bill, but saves the senator's daughter and earns a promotion with the FBI. Lector writes to congratulate Starling and assures her that, while he will kill again, he will not pursue her.

The Silence of the Lambs is a 1991 American psychological horror film directed by Jonathan Demme and written by Ted Tally, adapted from Thomas Harris's 1988 novel. It stars Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling, a young FBI trainee who is hunting a serial killer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), who skins his female victims. To catch him, she seeks the advice of the imprisoned Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), a brilliant psychiatrist

and cannibalistic serial killer. The film also features performances from Scott Glenn, Anthony Heald and Kasi Lemmons.

Robert Jonathan Demme (February 22, 1944 – April 26, 2017) was an American film director, producer and screenwriter of film and television who earned widespread acclaim. Demme was born and brought up at Baldwin, New York, he was the son of Dorothy Louise and Robert Eugene Demme, a public relations executive. He was raised in Rockville Centre, New York and Miami, where he graduated from Southwest Miami High School before attending the University of Florida. Demme broke into feature film working for exploitation film producer Roger Corman early in his career, co-writing and producing *Angels Hard as They Come* (1971), a motorcycle movie loosely based on *Rashomon*, and *The Hot Box* (1972). Originally beginning his career under B-movie producer Roger Corman, Demme made his directorial debut with the 1974 women-in-prison film *Caged Heat*, before becoming known for his casually humanist films such as *Melvin and Howard* (1980), *Swing Shift* (1984), *Something Wild* (1986), and *Married to the Mob* (1988). His direction of the 1991 psychological horror film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), won him the Academy Award for Best Director. His subsequent films earned similar acclaim, notably *Philadelphia* (1993) and *Rachel Getting Married* (2008). Throughout 1986–2004, Demme was known for his dramatic close-ups in films. This style of close-ups involves the character looking directly into the camera during crucial moments, particularly in the "Quid pro quo" scene in *The Silence of the Lambs*. According to Demme, this was done to put the viewer into the character's shoes. Beginning with *Rachel Getting Married* (2008), Demme adopted a documentary style of

filmmaking. Demme died at his home in Manhattan on April 26, 2017, from complications from esophageal cancer and heart disease; he was 73.

The Silence of the Lambs was released on February 14, 1991 and grossed \$272.7 million worldwide on a \$19 million budget, becoming the fifth-highest-grossing film of 1991 worldwide. It premiered at the 41st Berlin International Film Festival, where it competed for the Golden Bear, while Demme received the Silver Bear for Best Director. It became the third film (the other two being 1934's *It Happened One Night* and 1975's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) to win Academy Awards in all the top five categories: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. It is also the only Best Picture winner widely considered a horror film, and one of only six horror films to have been nominated in the category with *The Exorcist* (1973), *Jaws* (1975), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Black Swan* (2010), and *Get Out* (2017). According to *The Guardian*, before *The Silence of the Lambs*, "films portraying psychopathic killers tended to be cheap and nasty gore-fests" such as *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, or grindhouse films such as *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. Serial killers had been claw-handed bogeymen with melty faces and rubber masks. By contrast, Lecter was highly intelligent with impeccable manners, and played by an actor with "impeccable credentials".

The Silence of the Lambs is regularly cited by critics, film directors and audiences as one of the greatest and most influential films. In 2018, *Empire* ranked it 48th on their list of the 500 greatest movies of all time. The American Film Institute ranked it the fifth-greatest and most influential thriller film while Starling and Lecter were ranked among the greatest film heroines and villains. The film is considered "culturally, historically or

aesthetically" significant by the U.S. Library of Congress and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in 2011. A sequel, *Hannibal*, was released in 2001, followed by the prequels *Red Dragon* (2002) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007). *The Silence of the Lambs* was released on February 14, 1991, grossing almost \$14 million from 1,497 theaters over the 4-day President's Day weekend, placing at number one at the US box office. It remained at number one for five weeks. The film opened at the Odeon Leicester Square in London in June 1991 and grossed £290,936 in its opening week, which distributor Rank claimed was a world record opening week from one theatre. The following week it expanded to 281 screens and grossed £4,260,472 for the week, a UK record.

This project is to analyse the Psychology of Cannibalistic Serial Killers with reference to the novel and the movie *The Silence of the Lambs*. The Project is divided into three chapters, the first chapter deals with The Psychology Of Cannibalistic Serial Killers. The second chapter deals with the analysis of the psychological elements in the characters portrayed in the novel and movie, *The Silence of the Lambs*. The third chapter deals with the analysis of the Childhood Trauma with reference to the novel *The Silence of the Lambs*; followed by the Conclusion.

Chapter 1

Psychology of Cannibalistic Serial Killers

The term 'serial killer' strikes fear deep into the hearts of most. However it is often thought that fear is what drives some curiosities, thus finding it appropriate to understand why serial killers commit horrific acts of violence repetitively. It has been found that many serial killers encompass similar emotional development issues. They also tend to be above-average intelligence wise, and in some ways it is as if killing acts as a drug for some of these men. Many theories of crime and deviance correlate to the actions of serial killers. Studies of known serial killers have unveiled similarities between them as early as infancy. Infancy, childhood and relationships with one's mother are often among the key parallels of serial killers.

Serial Killers may be more likely to engage and exhibit a varying degrees of mental illness or psychopathy, which may contribute to their homicide behaviour. It has been analysed that FBI's crime classification manual places serial killers into three categories: organized serial killer who often plan their crimes methodically, usually abducting victims, killing them in one place and disposing of them in another. They often lure the victims with ploys appearing to their sense of sympathy. They kill the victim efficiently and quickly and have social and other interpersonal skills sufficient to enable them to develop both personal and romantic relationships, friends and lovers and unlikely to hurt anyone. E.g.: Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy.

Disorganized serial killers who are usually more impulsive, often committing their murders with a random weapon available at the time and usually do not attempt

to hide the body. They are likely to be unemployed, a loner, or both, with a very few friends and turn out to be have a history of mental illness and excessive violence.

To establish the relationship between the serial killer, the crime and the possible cause or motive behind such heinous crimes, is a major challenge for the investigating agency, the forensic and corrective experts. The serial killers may have their own compulsions or reasons behind the crime. Multi-disciplinary approach can be the answer to the crime against society.

This build up of energy stemming from the presence of an inadequate homelike situation which created an inability to cope with failure produces an explosion of violent behaviour. Sears found in his studies that the absence of loving and nurturing relationship with parents which tends to make them serial killers. Studies have shown that adults who were abused as children tend to exhibit violent outbursts. He also found the presence of an unnatural or unusual relationship between mothers and serial killers. The environment of the home has found to have many correlations with the development of a serial killer as well and the Federal Bureau of Investigations studies found that most serial killers spent their childhood in unhealthy, uncaring and abusive homes.

The psychology of the serial killer is intriguing yet frightening. The decay of these offenders' personalities begins at infancy for many and continues through childhood and into adulthood. The serial killer tends to be neglected during significant stages of infancy, where in which the development of the human personality begins. As these offenders enter childhood they are still at a disadvantage socially, often as a result of abuse and parental issues. Serial killers often lack self control, as well as other critical characteristics of a law abiding citizen. It seems as if

socialization plays a large roll in the formation of these monsters. A number of other criminological theories can be applied to the serial killer in some form, however there are still anomalies. The Biological Trait Theories, Psychodynamic theory, and the Organized/Disorganized theory all attempt to explain the inexplicable actions of serial killers. The biological trait theories apply as there is great emphasis on infancy and childhood emotional growth. The psychodynamic theory applies as well as these men display actions that seem to be driven by their id personality. Lastly, the organized/disorganized theory attempts to conclude personality and behavioural characteristics from crime scene investigation.

There is no concrete theory to explain neither the psychology nor the actions of serial killers, however there are a great deal of criminologists researching the topic. These researchers are attempting to better understand and deter such crime. The phenomenon of Serial killings date back to persons such as Jack the Ripper in 1887 and have continued into the present with such offenders as Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and David Berkowitz. Through criminological and sociological research perhaps a better understanding of serial killers will develop, thus producing a way to deter such criminal actions.

Some individuals show a biological predisposition to violence due to deficits of the brain system which involve a low level of frustration tolerance. In the volatile brain structure, stress events and environmental traumas are added. The real world only remains for the serial killers criminal activity, which he has previously fantasized about and that has led him to commit his first murder. He prefers to retreat into a private world of fantasies which satisfy him. After having committed the murder, the killer is ready to start the destructive cycle and become a serial killer. He chooses the

victim and after the murder spends a period of relative calm in which he elaborates and relives the murder he has just committed in his fantasy, until, once more, imagination is not enough, and he will feel the need to kill again.

Serial killers fantasy, When the serial killer murders his first victim, he activates what is known as cyclical mechanism, entering a circular complex mental process, like an addiction, which leads him to kill again(Bruno & Mrazzini). The murder becomes the transposition of one or more mental images within a real context and the dynamic process is bound to repeat itself with particular features of rituals. The imagination is the fundamental elements of human psyche through which he can change reality, replace something, review the past and anticipate the future. This is most commonly used by adults, as much as children to gain and maintain control over an imagined situations.

Through imagination any mood, such as anger, for example, begins to take shape oriented towards a specific goal and specific direction. During childhood children take refuge in fantasy and, according to the family context in which they grow up, project what they have learned or experienced as a way of relating to others.

They child will create a personal imaginary world and will project the hostility and hatred that the child has experienced in the real world. In fantasy any individual can imagine the self to be immense and without limits. The main differences between a criminal and a normal subject is that the former believes to have some sort of divine right to satisfy his fantasies, without moral or legal restrictions.

The serial killer's imagination plays a major role as he begins to fantasize about acts to be performed in order to express dominance over another human being. The decision making power of life and death infuses a feeling of omnipotence. When

his delusional fantasy reach a peak, its time to enjoy his actions of the murder, until a new emotional necessity or compulsion leads to kill again. For the serial murderer, the victim is like a checkers pawn to be manipulated at will in order to win the game.

These individuals compensate for their social loneliness by retreating to their fantasy world, which is in fact dominated by their imagination. Any serial killer, regardless of the reason behind the murders, always begins his destructive path due to fantasies.

Modus Operandi refers to the most common method adopted by a serial killer for committing the murder. The Modus Operandi is what the offender must do in order to commit the crime. For example, the killer must have a means to control his victims at the crime scene such as tying them up. Significantly, the Modus Operandi is a learned behaviour that is subject to change. A serial killer will alter and refine his Modus Operandi to accommodate new circumstances or to incorporate new skills and information. For example, instead of using rope to tie up a victim, the offender may learn that it is easier and more effective to bring handcuffs to the crime scene. The Modus Operandi of Jack the Ripper, for example, was that he attacked prostitutes at night on the street with a knife. In the book examines a profile of a serial murderer. By compiling and assessing the behavioural and development traits, a profile emerges of a typical serial murderer. He found that most serial killers tend to come from homes where they are physically or psychologically abused. He concludes his brief overview of the profile of a serial killer by stating the serial killer is obviously a distinctive and extremely dangerous criminal. He possesses a superficial charm, where by he may effectively mimic appropriate socially approved behaviour in any given setting.

The FBI completed an exhaustive study that found that most serial killers spent their childhood in unhealthy, uncaring and abusive homes. The study also found that family histories of serial murderers highlighted multiple problems to include alcohol and drug abuse. The study found that most of the murderers evaluated had a weak attachment to their family members, and that there was present a parent whom suffered from problems of substance abuse, criminality and aberrant sexual behaviour. A common theme among all murderers was a childhood with the absence of the development of self-worth. The connection between genetics, social environment, and criminal behaviour appears to be a reality, although in varying degrees across criminals. As Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) profiler Jim Clemente said, Genetics loads the gun, their personality and psychology aim it, and their experiences pull the trigger.

A landmark study of 50 serial killers found that childhood abuse was more prevalent in lust serial killers. One of the authors of this study, Michael G. Aamodt, explained, "Our data showed that a much higher percentage of serial killers were abused as children than the population in general". It certainly makes sense that the type of abuse received as a child - physical, sexual, or psychological - could influence a serial killers behaviour and choice of victim. While it is safe to recognize abuse as a factor contributing to the making of a serial killer, most people who face abuse do not become serial killers. In this study, 32% of all serial killers had no history of abuse.

In his book describes the cycles of violence as generational: Parents who abuse their children, physically as well as psychologically, instil in them an almost instinctive reliance upon violence as a first resort to any challenge. In another study, serial killers were analysed to understand the variables of childhood mistreatment and sexual aggression toward victims. The researchers found that serial killers treated

badly during childhood tended to sexually assault their victims before murdering them. On the other hand, serial killers who did not experience childhood abuse did not display sexually violent behaviour.

Chapter 2

Psychology of the Characters in *The Silence of the Lambs*

In 1990, Clarice Starling is pulled from her FBI training at the Quantico, Virginia FBI Academy by Jack Crawford of the Bureau's Behavioral Science Unit. He assigns her to interview Hannibal Lecter, a former psychiatrist and incarcerated cannibalistic serial killer. Lecter's insight could prove useful in the pursuit of a serial killer nicknamed Buffalo Bill, who kills young women and removes their skin.

At the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Dr. Frederick Chilton makes a crude pass at Starling before he escorts her to Lecter's cell. Although initially pleasant and courteous, Lecter grows impatient with Starling's interviewing and rebuffs her. As she is leaving, a prisoner named Miggs flicks semen at her. Lecter, who considers this an "unspeakably ugly" act, calls Starling back and tells her to seek out his old patient. This leads her to a storage facility, where she discovers a jar containing a man's severed head. She returns to Lecter, who says the man is linked to Buffalo Bill. He offers to profile Buffalo Bill on condition he be transferred away from Chilton, whom he detests. Another Buffalo Bill victim is found who has a death's head moth lodged in her throat.

Buffalo Bill abducts Catherine Martin, a senator's daughter. Crawford authorizes Starling to offer Lecter a fake deal, promising a prison transfer if he provides information that helps them capture Buffalo Bill and rescue Catherine. Instead, Lecter demands a quid pro quo from Starling, offering clues about Buffalo Bill in exchange for personal information. Starling tells Lecter about her father's murder when she was ten years old.

Chilton secretly records the conversation and reveals Starling's deceit before offering Lecter a different deal. Lecter agrees and is flown to Memphis, where he meets and torments Senator Martin, then gives her misleading information on Buffalo Bill, including that his name "Louis Friend".

Starling deduces that "Louis Friend" is an anagram of "iron sulfide"—fool's gold. She visits Lecter, who is now imprisoned in a cell in a Tennessee courthouse, and requests the truth. Lecter says all the information she needs is contained in the Buffalo Bill case file, then insists on continuing their quid pro quo. She recounts a traumatic childhood incident of hearing spring lambs being slaughtered on a relative's Montana farm. Lecter speculates that Starling hopes that saving Catherine will end the recurring nightmares she has of lambs screaming. Lecter returns the Buffalo Bill case files to Starling as Chilton arrives and has the police escort her from the building. Later that evening, Lecter kills his guards, escapes from his cell, and disappears.

Starling analyzes Lecter's file annotations and deduces that Buffalo Bill knew his first victim, Frederika Bimmel. Starling travels to her Ohio hometown and discovers both she and Buffalo Bill were tailors. At Frederika's home, she notices unfinished dresses and dress patterns identical to the patches of skin removed from the victims. She phones Crawford and says Buffalo Bill is making a "suit" with human skin. Crawford is already enroute to make an arrest, having cross-referenced Lecter's notes with hospital archives and finding a man named James Gumb. Gumb smuggled death head moths into the U.S. and was refused a sex-change operation, mistakenly believing he was transsexual. Starling continues interviewing Frederika's friends while Crawford and an FBI HRT storm Gumb's address in Illinois, finding the house empty. Meanwhile, Starling goes to

interview another person who knew Frederika. At the house, she meets "Jack Gordon", but realizes he is Gumb after spotting a death's head moth flying loose. She pursues him into a cavernous basement where she finds Catherine trapped in a dry well. In a dark room, Gumb stalks Starling with night-vision goggles, but reveals himself by cocking his revolver. Starling reacts quickly and shoots Gumb dead.

At the FBI Academy graduation party, Starling receives a phone call from Lecter, who is at a Bimini airport. He wishes her well, and says he must hang up because he is "having an old friend for dinner". He trails a newly arrived Chilton into the crowd.

If we go through the Major characters of the novel *The Silence Of The Lambs*, we can understand their nature and their psychology. First of all speaking about the protagonist Clarice Starling ,Although never stated, Clarice seems to be the kind of person whose school report might have said "does not play well with others" because she is very intense and seems to have trouble taking others with a pinch of salt or with any humor. She is a high flyer who is brilliant and hard working, and also attractive, which makes working at the FBI almost impossible in terms of the way her male counterparts treat her.

Then getting to the main antagonist Dr. Hannibal Lecter, who is one of those characters in fiction who is undoubtedly so evil that the depths of their madness cannot be adequately conveyed on a page, but who, conversely, is so fascinating, erudite and charming that we, the readers, become almost as taken with him as we are with the protagonist, Clarice Starling. There comes another major antagonist of the novel Mr. Buffalo Bill, He is another serial killer whose deviance is minimized by a catchy nickname, he warned this one by skinning his victims. Whether they were skinned alive

or after death is never stipulated. Bill does not have the social skills or intelligence to make himself fascinating in the manner of Dr. Lecter and is not particularly well developed as a character outside of his murderous activity.

In the movie *The Silence Of The Lambs* the Director Jonathan Demme largely deceives the audience through his use of the different ranges and depths of narration. The range alternates between omniscient and restricted; the subjective depth and the objective depth shots mingle. For instance, we first encounter Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), who seems perfectly harmless and calm in his still posture, through the eyes of Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster). This very first sight of him, however, is completely misleading about his true nature. Later, the audience witnesses “Hannibal the Cannibal” who indifferently murders two cops after unlocking his handcuff using the small metal pen piece. Lecter, who seemed an intelligent psychiatrist in Clarice’s eyes and the eyes of the victims, reveals himself as a monstrous killer. Similarly, all male FBI agents and sheriffs seem ordinary in the objective depth shots. However, in Clarice’s point of view shots, they turn into somewhat threatening characters, with their flirtatious and condescending glances. In the funeral home where Clarice gives an order to the male sheriffs, one can see both objective and subjective depth. The panning shot around the room allows one to acknowledge not only her vulnerability as a woman, but also her strength to overcome them. Through deliberately employing the contrasting ranges and depths of narration, Demme demonstrates the deceiving nature of what the victims see.

The director further conveys the danger of relying on sight through point of view editing. When Catherine (Brooke Smith) sees Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine) for the first time, he is merely an older man with a broken arm who needs help moving a sofa into his

truck. She does not think of him as a murderer because that is not what she sees. As a result, she falls into his trap and becomes Jame Gumb's sixth prey. Ironically, the murderer's heavy dependence on his vision also brings his end. In the final moment of darkness, he slowly creeps behind Clarice, enjoying the complete control provided by his goggles. He unconcernedly pulls out a gun because what he sees is only a powerless woman. Then Clarice shoots him dead upon hearing him cock his gun. What Gumb saw was a frightened girl, not Clarice Starling, who is a brave woman FBI trainee.

Chapter 3

The Childhood Trauma

In the movie *The Silence of the Lambs* the protagonist Clarice Starling is the victim of trauma. Childhood trauma has explored the theme quite effectively. Though she is the definition of a strong woman and FBI agent, she had a troubled childhood. In the film adaptation Clarice was played by Jodie Foster. Clarice Starling, as portrayed by Foster, was ranked the sixth greatest protagonist in film history on AFI's 100 years, 100 heroes and villains making her the highest ranking heroine. With her sharp face intensity, Jodie Foster is outstanding as Clarice.

The movie *The Silence of the Lambs* was directed by Jonathan Demme. He proved to be the rare maverick filmmaker who managed to find a place for his talents within the Hollywood system while still making movies in his own way and on his own terms. His notable movies include Philadelphia (1993), Melvin and Howard (1980), Beloved (1998) etc...

The movie commences with the main character Clarice Starling, an FBI trainee. She is pulled from her training at the FBI academy at Quantico, Virginia by Jack Crawford of the Bureau's Behavioural Science Unit. He assigns her to interview Hannibal Lecter, a former psychiatrist and incarcerated cannibalistic serial killer, whose insight might prove useful in the pursuit of a psychopath serial killer nicknamed "Buffalo Bill", who kills young women and then remove the skin from their bodies.

Starling travels to the Baltimore State Hospital for the criminally insane, where she is led by Frederic Chilton to Lecter's solitary quarters. Although initially

pleasant and courteous, Lecter grows impatient with Starling's attempts at "dissecting" him and rebuffs her. As she is leaving, one of the prisoners flicks semen at her. Lecter, who considers this act "unspeakably ugly", calls Starling back and tells her to seek out an old patient of his. This leads her to a storage shed, where she discovers a man's severed head with a sphinx moth lodged in its throat. She returns to Lecter, who tells her that the man is linked to Buffalo Bill. He offers to profile Buffalo Bill on the condition that he may be transferred away from Chilton, whom he detests.

Buffalo Bill abducts a senator's daughter, Catherine Martin. Crawford authorizes Starling to offer Lecter a fake deal, promising a prison transfer if he provides information that helps them find Buffalo Bill and rescue Catherine. Instead, Lecter demands a quid pro quo from Starling, offering clues about Buffalo Bill in exchange of personal information. Starling tells Lecter about the murder of her father when she was ten years old. Chilton secretly records the conversation and reveals Starling's deceit before offering Lecter a deal of Chilton's own making. Lecter agrees and is flown to Memphis, where he verbally torments Senator Ruth Martin, and gives her misleading information on Buffalo Bill, including the name "Louis Friend".

Starling notices that "Louis Friend" is an anagram of "iron sulphide"- fool's gold. She visits Lecter, who is now being held in a cage-like cell in a Tennessee courthouse, and asks for the truth. Lecter tells her that all the information she needs is contained in the case file. Rather than give her the real name, he insists that they continue their quid pro quo and she recounts a traumatic childhood incident where she was awakened by the sound of spring lambs being slaughtered on a relative's farm in Montana. Starling admits that she still sometimes wakes thinking she can hear lambs screaming, and Lecter speculates that she is motivated to save Catherine in the hope

that it will end the nightmares. Lecter gives her back the case files on Buffalo Bill after their conversation is interrupted by Chilton and the police, who escort her from the building. Later that evening, Lecter kills his guards, escapes from his cell, and disappears.

Starling analyses Lecter's annotations to the case files and realizes that Buffalo Bill knew his first victim personally. Starling travels to the victim's hometown and discovers that Buffalo Bill was a tailor, with dresses and dress patterns identical to the patches of skin removed from each of his victims. She telephones Crawford to inform him that Buffalo Bill is trying to form a "woman suit" out of real skin, but Crawford is already en route to make an arrest, having cross-referenced Lecter's notes with hospital archives and finding an autogynephilic man named James Gumb, who once applied unsuccessfully for a sex-change operation, believing himself to be a transgender woman. Starling continues interviewing friends of Buffalo Bill's first victim in Ohio, while Crawford leads an FBI HRT team to Gumb's address in Illinois. The house in Illinois is empty, and Starling is led to the house of "Jack Gordon", whom she realizes is actually James Gumb, again by finding a sphinx moth. She pursues him into his multi-room basement, where she discovers that Catherine is still alive, but trapped in a dry well. After turning off the basement lights, Gumb stalks Starling in the dark with night-vision goggles, but gives his position away when he cocks his revolver. Starling reacts just in time and fires all of her rounds, killing Gumb.

Sometimes later, at the FBI Academy graduation party, Starling receives a phone call from Lecter, who is at an airport in Bimini. Lecter asks her that "well, Clarice, have the lambs stopped screaming?" he assures her that he does not plan to pursue her and asks her to return the favour, which she says she cannot do. Lecter then

hangs up the phone, saying that he is “having an old friend for dinner”, and starts to following a newly arrived Chilton before disappearing into the crowd.

When we look close to her trauma, even after Lecter has killed more people in his escape from custody, Clarice still believes she was on the right track in getting his help. She needs his advice a vital clue in the case file, as Lecter suggested. Steadfast in her resolve, Clarice must hold out until the process that is threatening the “lambs” comes to an end. As a child Clarice took action by kidnapping the lambs to save it from being slaughtered; she actively joined the FBI to go after killers, like the one who killed her father; encountering Buffalo Bill, she tries to apprehend him herself. Her father was a police officer. He was shot dead when he reacted to a robbery. Clarice was only ten years older then. So she believes that if she trap Buffalo Bill she can maybe escape from the trauma.

Clarice methodically follows up each clue provide by Lecter and others to gather evidence that eventually leads her to Buffalo Bill. Finally she trapped him and encountered him. If serial killers would stop victimizing innocents, and lambs were safe from men and knives, Clarice (and society) could sleep easily at night. She believes that it will heal her wounds. Clarice’s every waking hour (and some of her dream time) is dedicated to the activity of detecting and fighting criminals, particularly serial killers, for the FBI.

Throughout the story, Starling is always doing something, forever moving, on her feet, hardly ever even sitting down. She is presented as a woman of action, running an obstacle works alone through the boggy woods. She changes all throughout the movie. Even though she struggles to escape from her worst childhood she reached her life goal, a FBI agent. She believes that the profession may help her to

forget the trauma of her life. She is brave, smart and beautiful. Clarice wants to do her job the best she can (and even outdo her father), and will do whatever it takes, even if it means retrieving preserved heads from storage lockers and attending gruesome autopsies.

By working intimately with the serial killer Hannibal Lecter, Clarice Starling uncovers the identity of another serial killer, Buffalo Bill. She succeeds in rescuing the Senator's daughter he's kidnapped and in killing him, and becomes an FBI agent of whom her father would have been proud. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, lambs being slaughtered that she experienced as a child, serene a metaphor for the innocent people who will continue to be slaughtered despite her efforts. In addition to her experience in saving lambs, Clarice's drive to apprehend killers comes largely from the loss of her father.

In this movie Clarice and Lecter shares a different relationship. Lecter respect Clarice because of her bravery and the respect she gave him. Starling always strived for the protection of people from would-be slaughterers. Whereas Lecter is presented as a cannibal who believed that people are better cooked, and eaten with fava beans and a good Chianti. Lecter's impulses as a psychiatrist drive him to learn Clarice's deepest secrets. Her training as an FBI agent enables her instinctively hide her fears. A character Campbell said to Clarice that "You tell him nothing personal, Starling. Believe me, you don't want Hannibal Lecter inside your head..." But only by exposing herself to him can she learn the information she needs to rescue the Senator's daughter and silence her screaming lambs.

It's seen that Clarice worries about getting too close to criminals like Lecter and Buffalo Bill, perhaps deterred by her father's fate. She jumps each time Lecter

slams his sliding food tray, hesitates to take what he puts in it, even when it's only a towel. But when he does make contact, it's only to gently stroke her finger—her worries were unfounded. Clarice's confidence in her abilities as an FBI agent butts up against Lecter's record of outwitting all in his path and killing many. Confidence eventually wins out, as Clarice gets her information and Lecter confesses he is not after her, negating her personal worries about him.

A number of aspects makes the movie interesting. First of all *The Silence of the Lambs* has an uncommon plot line. Thomas Harris has written a bizarre relationship between Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter, and how Hannibal Lecter always makes a good behavioural analysis about Buffalo Bill. Thomas Harris was very successful in building the character of Hannibal Lecter along with the visualization and the cast of the movie. Jonathan Demme makes the audience feel enthusiastic with this thriller movie, even when the movie shows about the process of autopsy of the Frederica Bimmel, the last victim of Buffalo Bill. The casts of this film also have a valuable part in this film. Sir Anthony Hopkins who plays as Hannibal Lecter is a good actor. He makes the character of Hannibal Lecter life like. So when people talk about Hannibal Lecter, they will also talk about Sir Anthony Hopkins. Jodie Foster successfully represented the young FBI trainee who is smart, ambitious, and fearless.

The movie also gives a number of messages. One of these messages is about the importance of someone's life. Lastly the way how Clarice Starling tries to deal with her emotional traumatic childhood memory by doing quid pro quo games with Hannibal Lecter in order to get the psychological behavioural profile of Buffalo Bill is quite commendable. In that situation she deals with the dilemma because it means that she has to remember her father's death and other painful experiences, and it can be a

good chance too for Hannibal Lecter if he wants to spoil her. In other way, if she does not go along with Lecter's game, Starling will not be able to save Catherine Martin. In that position, she does a lot of way to face her anxiety and makes everything runs perfectly; one of the ways is defence mechanism.

Childhood trauma is not a disease but a mental situation. It is not impossible to heal. All one need to do is open up with someone they trust. Maybe they can't be of any help but they can listen. Opening up to someone relieves the burden. In the movie Clarice had Lecter to help her. He could read her even if she tells him or not. Discussing your problems with someone will surely enable that person to lessen the pain. The movie does not clarify if Starling escapes from trauma or not.

Conclusion

Roger Luckhurst's *Mixing memory and desire: psychoanalysis, psychology and Trauma Theory*, describes trauma as something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by usual mental processes. We have, as it were nowhere to put it, and so it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in our mind like an intruder or a ghost. In psychoanalysis, the Trauma is a displaced anomaly that refuses the clean connections of logic. It is a memory that has no articulation and thus cannot have an accurate stream of events to define its reason. Psychological pitfalls such as false memory syndrome and hypnotic suggestibility render a subjective testimony dubious especially in light of the official penchant for objective analysis.

The present project dealt with the psychological analysis of the serial killers with reference to the novel *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and its movie *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). The psychology of the serial killer is intriguing yet frightening. The decay of these offenders' personalities begins at infancy for many and continues through childhood and into adulthood. The serial killer tends to be neglected during significant stages of infancy, where in which the development of the human personality begins. As these offenders enter childhood they are still at a disadvantage socially, often as a result of abuse and parental issues. Serial killers often lack self control, as well as other critical characteristics of a law abiding citizen. It seems as if socialization plays a large roll in the formation of these monsters. A number of other criminological theories can be applied to the serial killer in some form, however there are still anomalies. There is no

concrete theory to explain neither the psychology nor the actions of serial killers, however there are a great deal of criminologists researching the topic. This project is attempting to better understand and deter such crime. In the novel Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill were such psycho killers.

This project gives a wide idea about the psychology of the cannibalistic serial killers, the features of the serial killers and the situations that creates a serial killer, like childhood trauma, with reference to characters in the novel *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) by Thomas Harris and it's movie that came out in 1991.

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